

What is claimed is:

1. An audio/video-call system for allowing communication between a first user and a second user, wherein the communication includes an audio stream, a video stream, and a data stream, the system comprising:

a first and second communication systems separated geographically, wherein the first user and the second user each control one of the communication systems, and wherein each of the communication systems include a video camera, a microphone, an Internet socket for connecting the communication system to the Internet, and a phone socket for connecting the communication system to a phone line;

wherein the Internet is used for sending a data stream initiating a call from the first communication system to the second communication system, and for transmitting the video stream and the data stream between the first and the second communication systems once the call is initiated; and

wherein once the call is initiated, the phone line is used for sending the audio stream between the first user and the second user.

2. The audio/video-call system of claim 1, further comprising a remote control system for issuing commands to the communication systems.
3. The audio/video-call system of claim 2, wherein the remote control system includes a housing containing a set of user-activated buttons, a transmitter, and the microphone;

where in response to the user pressing one of the user-activated buttons, the transmitter sends a command to a television; and

wherein when the user speaks during an audio/visual call, the microphone converts the voice of the user to an audio signal, and the transmitter sends the audio signal to the audio/video call system.

4. The audio/video-call system of claim 1, further comprising a television socket for coupling the first communication system to a television, wherein the video stream and available commands to control the first communication system is displayed on the television.
5. The audio/video-call system of claim 4, wherein the television includes a speaker which broadcasts the audio stream once the call is initiated.
6. The audio/video-call system of claim 1, further comprising a third communication systems; wherein the first communication system can initiate a call with the second communication system or the third communication system.
7. The audio/video-call system of claim 1, wherein the first user is a caregiver and the second user is an elderly or disabled individual.
8. The audio/video-call system of claim 1, further comprising a panic button wirelessly coupled to the second communication system, for the second user to indicate distress and for the second communication system to respond by contacting help.
9. An audio/video-call system for allowing communication between a first user and a second user, wherein the communication includes an audio stream, a video stream, and a data stream, the system comprising:

a communication system controlled by the first user which includes a video camera, a microphone, an Internet socket for connecting the communication system to the Internet, and a phone socket for connecting the communication system to a phone line;

wherein the Internet is used for sending a data stream initiating a call from the communication system, and for transmitting the video stream and the data stream from the communication system once the call is initiated; and

wherein once the call is initiated, the phone line is used for sending the audio stream

from the first user.

10. A method for an audio/video-call allowing a first user to communicate with a second user, wherein the communication includes an audio stream, a video stream, and a data stream, the method comprising:

providing a communication system controlled by the first user which includes a video camera, a microphone, an Internet socket for connecting the communication system to the Internet, and a phone socket for connecting the communication system to a phone line;

sending a call request as a data stream over the Internet from the communication system to a geographically separated second communication system;

converting the image of the user to a video signal with the video camera;

sending the video signal as the video stream over the Internet from the communication system to the second communication system once the call request is accepted by the second communication system;

converting the voice of the user to an audio signal with the microphone; and

sending the audio signal as the audio stream over the phone line from the first user to the second user at the second communication system.

11. An audio/video-call system, comprising:

a first and a second communication system for a first and second user respectively, the first and second communication systems connected by at least one network connection;

wherein a request from the first communication system to establish a communication link with the second communication system causes the second communication system to automatically display to the second user a set of choices on a television;

wherein the television is either on or is activated on as a result of the request; and
 wherein the response of the second user to one of the set of choices results in the call being established or the call being refused.

12. The audio/video-call system from claim 11, wherein the set of choices displayed to the second user are: "refuse call," "accept audio call only," and "accept audio and video call."
13. The audio/video-call system from claim 11, wherein the second user is a disabled or elderly individual.
14. The audio/video-call system from claim 11, wherein the first user is a caregiver.
15. An audio/video-call system comprising a first and a second communication system which are geographically separated and which are for a first and a second user respectively;

wherein the first and the second communication system each has an Internet socket for connecting to the Internet, thereby coupling the communication systems; and

wherein the first and the second communication systems each have a regular mode of operation which require that for a communication to be established between the two communication systems, the first communication system must initiate a call request to the second communication system and the second communication system must respond with an acceptance to the request; and

wherein the first communication system also has a passkey mode of operation which allows the first communication system to establish communication with the second communication system without the second communication system responding to any request.

16. The audio/video-call system from claim 15, wherein the digital data encoded on a smart card is used to place the first communication system in the passkey mode of

operation.

17. The audio/video-call system from claim 15, wherein the digital data stored within the first communication system is used to place the first communication system in the passkey mode of operation.
18. The audio/video-call system from claim 15, wherein the digital data stored within a personal digital assistant is used to place the first communication system in the passkey mode of operation.
19. The audio/video-call system from claim 15, wherein the first user is a caregiver and the second user is an elderly or disabled individual.
20. The audio/video-call system from claim 15, further wherein the first and the second communication system each has a phone socket for connecting to a phone line, thereby coupling the communication systems.
21. A communication system for a user of an audio/video-call system,

wherein the communication system has a memory and an Internet socket for connecting to the Internet and a phone socket for connecting to a phone line; and

wherein without the intervention of the user, an operator downloads a file to the memory which associates an identification object to the telephone number of a person to be called and the network address of the computer of the person to be called.
22. The audio/video-call system from claim 21, wherein the operator retrieves information from a database for the file which is downloaded to the memory.
23. The audio/video-call system from claim 21, wherein the operator communicates with the first user via a phone call.
24. The audio/video-call system from claim 21, wherein the operator communicates with

the first user via an audio/video-call.

25. The audio/video-call system from claim 21, wherein the memory is located on a smartcard.

26. A remote control unit for a user of an audio/video conferencing system, the remote control unit comprising:

a housing containing a set of user-activated buttons, a transmitter, and a microphone;

where in response to the user pressing one of the user-activated buttons, the transmitter sends a command to a television; and

wherein when the user speaks during the audio/video conference, the microphone converts the voice of the user to an audio signal, and the transmitter sends the audio signal to the audio/video conferencing system.